

NEW PUBLICATIONS

MAGIC, ETC.

A DOUBLE LIFE, OR, STARE CROSS. An Hypnotic Romance. By HERBERT E. CHASE. 12mo. pp. 301. New-York: S. W. Green's Sons.

The interesting physician whose meditations upon electro-biology and other high-toned sciences are introduced as a prelude to the marvels recorded in this book, defines hypnotism as a state of un-natural exaltation followed by an equally abnormal and extraordinary stupor, and produced by the steady contemplation of certain glittering objects.

The story of "A Double Life" has no special connection with this phenomenon, and yet it is not an empty name "an hypnotic romance." The author has fixed a strained attention upon various doubtful and fascinating theories of pseudoscience until the excitement of his intellect has been followed by a profound and hopeless stupidity. He is one of that large class of fiction-makers who believe that they have found in spiritualism, magnetism, will-force, clairvoyance and kindred marvels, a valuable material for their wares, but who lack both the scientific knowledge and the ingenuity to put the material to effective use. An author who deals with a subject entirely beyond the range of common sense and practical experience may let his fancy fly unrestrained and repeat for us if he can all the wonders of "The Arabian Nights"; but when he tries to marry the marvellous with the commonplace, to represent magicians promenading Fourth-avenue, and necromancers performing apparently supernatural feats on the Erie Railroad, he blinds himself to a condition much more difficult than any exacted by fairy tales; that is to say, he is required to be plausible. As we write a little while ago, in reviewing a book of the same class, the reader will accept any sort of improbability, at least as an amusing and ingenious exercise of the imagination, provided the writer has art enough to give it an air of truth. And this is just where the inferior workmen fail. Mr. Chase's wonder-workers, who raise the dead, stay the advance of age, take human life by an exercise of will, read the thoughts of distant persons, solve the secret of existence, and have learned how to overcome gravitation, to precipitate the thoughts of mesmeric clairvoyants upon screens, and to set water on fire ("few there are," sagely remarks our author, "to whom this secret might be safely intrusted"), are meant to be serious and awful, but they are only burlesque "Sorcerers" in the style of J. Madison Wells.

But this is a story of "A Double Life," and so it happens that the hero, who is a dreadful being when he is Starr Cross, and holds the power of life and death, is a very nice young man named Edward when he works in the garden and makes love to Widow Brown's daughter. We remember nothing in literature to which the conversation of Widow Brown and Miss Carré can properly be compared. They are humble people, the excellent widow being the relief of one of Dr. Hendon's servants, and they live in a cottage on the Hudson with a Gothic window in it, and an organ. Miss Carré sings a song. In the churchyard lies full in sight, Lulu, of which we are favored with only one stanza; but it is a wonderful effect of distance and atmosphere in William Adair Parsons' "Carré, Furse and Watson" in the August "Century."

A particularly entertaining article in the August "Harper" that in which Miss Carré tells us of the association of the two artists. It is pleasant to be reminded how creative the work of the association is to the industrial up-keepers of women and to the state of beauty in the world.

Esther's account of Hassitt's devotion to the tea-set is interesting. Height usually runs from one to two o'clock in the day, scarcely ever above twelve; and if he had no work to hand, he would sit over his breakfast of excessively strong black tea and a toasted French roll till four or five in the afternoon—stout, motionless, and self-absorbed as a Turk over his opium pouch; for tea served him precisely in this capacity. It was the only stimulus he ever took, and at the same time the only luxury; the deliquescent state of his digestive organs prevented him from tasting any fermented liquor. He never touched any but black tea, and was very particular about the quality of that, always using the most expensive that could be got; and he used, when living alone, to consume nearly a pound in a week. A cup of Hassitt's tea if you happened to come for the first brew of it was a singular thing; it never tasted anything like it. He always made himself half-bill, tea-trap with tea, pouring the boiling water on it, and then almost immediately pouring it out, using with it a great quantity of sugar and cream. To judge from its occasional effect upon myself, I should say that the quantity Hassitt drank of this tea produced ultimately a most injurious effect upon him, and in all probability hastened his death, which took place from a fit of apoplexy, a few days after he had been taller in his younger days. But the long sweeping drapery, when on great occasions the train was let loose, gave her all the advantage of it, and she was called of the softest silver-haired hair. I suppose in time it became quite silver, but my memory's picture it never alters."

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